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Viewing cable 09OSLO635, NORWAY'S 2010 DEFENSE BUDGET: HIGH NORTH AND

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09OSLO635	2009-10-15 15:26	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET//NOFORN	Embassy Oslo

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2010

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SUBJECT: NORWAY'S 2010 DEFENSE BUDGET: HIGH NORTH AND
INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS

REF: OSLO 632

Classified By: Charge d'affaires James T. Heg for reasons
1.4(b) and (d)

11. (S/NF) Summary: Deputy Defense Minister Espen Barth-Eide outlined October 13 his talking points for the NATO new Strategic Concept discussion in Luxembourg October 16. He emphasized that striking a balance between in-area and out-of-area operations is key to ensuring that NATO remains relevant to the public and capable of defending homeland territories, while deploying expeditionary forces to eliminate threats emanating from abroad. He noted that Norway's 2010 defense budget will include a 395 million Norwegian Kroner (about USD 70 million) real increase, with the High North (Arctic area) remaining Norway's top defense and foreign policy priority. Additional funds will focus on improved and increased capabilities for all of Norway's armed forces, including the Coast Guard. Russian offensive exercises off Norway's coast have demonstrated that Russian forces over the past few years are increasingly well-funded and better trained, said Barth-Eide. However, Norway did not view the exercises as much of a threat, but rather as Russia's attempt to emerge as the dominant Arctic power by default. If other Arctic nations and Europe fail to engage pro-actively to counter Russia's influence, particularly its soft power influence, he warned, Russia will set the Arctic agenda. On Afghanistan, Barth-Eide affirmed that Norway will remain engaged as long as necessary and plans to send better trained troops and more officers to assist Afghan capacity building. End Summary.

Norway's 2010 Defense Budget

12. (SBU) Deputy MinDef Espen Barth-Eide told CDA, PolOff, and A/DATT October 13 that Norway's defense budget in 2010 would increase by 1.473 billion Norwegian Kroner (NOK), which translates into a real increase of about 395 million NOK, or approximately USD 70 million, after inflation and salary and pension adjustments are taken into account. Norway's top priority remains the High North, with spending set aside for the purchase of a new frigate and coast guard vessels. Army and Air Force activities in the High North will also be the top priority, in addition to maintaining a strong border control operation along the 200 km border with Russia, and the further development of the new Defense Joint Headquarters. (On August 1 this year, Norway's Joint Defense HQ moved from the southern port city of Stavanger to the northern city of Reitan, outside of Bodo.)

Nordic Cooperation

13. (C) Bringing Sweden and Finland closer to NATO would be the likely outcome of increased Nordic Cooperation, according to Barth-Eide. He noted that Norway and Sweden will jointly acquire land-based artillery in 2010; however, he did not name any other specific opportunities for collaboration. Barth-Eide reiterated that NATO is and will remain Norway's top priority.

Afghanistan

14. (C) Norway's 2010 budget prioritizes military engagement in Afghanistan, with a focus on capacity building designed to strengthen Afghan ability to achieve stability and security.

Barth-Eide said that the goal is to keep troop levels steady, while sending out more experienced and trained troops and additional officers and to focus on Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs). The end result, he said, would be an increase in quality and not numbers. He echoed several other Norwegian political leaders by adding that Norway will remain in Afghanistan, and depart only when all allies agree that the situation allows for re-deployment (reftel).

Article 5 and NATO's new Strategic Concept

¶5. (C) Espen Barth-Eide will address the October 16 meeting in Luxembourg of NATO's Strategic Concept Experts Working Group, on the topic "Core Tasks of the Alliance and Article 5." Barth-Eide said he would focus the discussion on striking a balance between in- and out-of-area operations, with the focus on three basic tasks: consolidate emerging democracies, manage Russia, and engage militarily with

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expeditionary forces as necessary. Barth-Eide emphasized that as NATO's has transitioned into the 21st century, a growing challenge has been ensuring that new generations see NATO as a relevant organization and remain supportive over the coming years. He added that NATO still maintains high popularity among the Norwegian public at large, at least for now.

¶6. (C) Barth-Eide said the Baltic states are truly concerned about the lack of planning in NATO, and feel as though they don't know who to call when they need urgent assistance in case of an emergency. Barth-Eide said a way to alleviate their concerns would be: 1) an increase in NATO exercises which include participation from regional commands such as Brunssum; 2) in theater regional-responsibilities assigned to NATO commands (He referred to the current structure as "post-modern," lacking coherent structure to deal with potential emergencies in NATO countries), and 3) a vision statement that does not dismiss geopolitics and the potential for localized conflicts in regional settings. Barth-Eide cited the situation in Georgia as an example. He concluded by noting the importance of taking "real politik" into consideration as NATO drafts its new Strategic Concept.

High North NATO-hatted exercise and Russian Maneuvering

¶7. (S/NF) Barth-Eide gave the standard Norwegian line on the importance of the High North, and said that Norway would likely request that the 2010 Cold Response exercise be hatted as a NATO exercise. (Comment: Barth-Eide did not provide specifics on when a request would be submitted to NATO, and our MFA colleagues recently emphasized that the way forward will be the "High North, low tension" version of Norwegian policy, i.e. no NATO exercises that could provoke the Russians, so whether a request is submitted appears to remain open to debate. End Comment.) He brought up the importance of military surveillance and assistance to civilian shipping, as new trade routes are opened in the Arctic. He also noted that the Russian military exercises along Norway's coast were offensive, and that Russian forces had a marked and fast increase in capacity: they have more planes that are in better shape, and fly in more complex formations, altogether demonstrating improved integrated planning. However, he emphasized that the Russians prefer to be included in discussions and be seen as relevant; their offensive exercises tend to increase when they perceive that discussions are proceeding without their participation. Barth-Eide said therefore he was not too worried about the maneuvers, but added that Norway and other Arctic and European actors needed to remain heavily engaged to ensure that Russia doesn't dominate the area by default.

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